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## Rumsfeld Requests Power To Reorganize Services

By Thom Shanker

WASHINGTON, April 13 — Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is asking Congress for broad new powers to reshape the uniformed services from the highest ranking officers down to reservists and supply clerks.

If approved, the legislation would put Mr. Rumsfeld's stamp on personnel practices for years, even decades, to come, powerfully influencing assignments and promotions at the top of the chain of command and refocusing many people lower in the ranks on fighting wars rather than pushing pencils.

Mr. Rumsfeld's legislative requests, which Congressional aides said today were delivered this weekend and would be circulated broadly to members on Monday, are certain to spark debate. But they could receive a more sympathetic hearing in the wake of the campaign in Iraq, which is already seen as a victory for advocates of a leaner and more agile military, one that is both more sophisticated and deadlier.

David S. C. Chu, the under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, described the plan as the most sweeping reorganization of military personnel since the Eisenhower administration.

He said the proposed legislation requests greater flexibility over personnel policy affecting the very senior levels, allowing a defense secretary to extend the tenure of generals and admirals in especially important jobs, while easing the early retirement of those unlikely to be promoted further.

Lower in the ranks, the legislation would clear the way for transferring a large number of military support jobs to civilian employees — about 300,000 are under consideration, Mr. Chu said — increasing the numbers of combat troops without adding to the roughly 1.5 million people in uniform today. And it would change the peacetime schedule of reservists, who have been called up by the tens of thousands over the past two years for the campaign against terror.

Active-duty military personnel could switch into the Reserves for a number of years if family pressures or desires for education made full-time service difficult, and then return to the active service, which does not happen now.

Reservists could opt for specialties that guarantee more active service time and mobilization if that fit their lives; others, depending on the specialties they chose, would be confident of less time on active duty beyond the weekend a month and two weeks a year of training now.

Senior Pentagon officials and Congressional aides who have read the legislation say its most significant, and probably most controversial, proposals provide for longer tenure for some of the most senior generals and admirals, raising the retirement age from the current 62 years and allowing a number of four-star positions to serve beyond one term. For example, the chiefs of the armed services must now retire after four years unless Congress declares war or a national emergency.

Mr. Rumsfeld already experimented with this process, asking Gen. James Jones to depart early from his post as commandant of the Marine Corps, a four-year job that had been the final post for the top Marine

four-star general, to serve as commander of all American and allied forces in Europe.

Even at lower levels of the general and flag officer corps, the goal would be to have more senior military leaders spend more than the traditional two years in a single job.

The legislation has been written and rewritten since late last year, and Mr. Rumsfeld hinted at some of the designs in January in a speech to the Reserve Officers Association.

The armed services "make a terrible mistake" by "having so many people skip along the tops of the waves in a job and serve in it 12, 15, 18, 24 months and be gone," he said. "They spend the first six months saying hello to everybody, the next six months trying to learn the job and the last six months leaving. I like people to be in a job long enough that they make mistakes, see their mistakes, clean up their own mistakes before they go on to make mistakes somewhere else."

To ease the growing numbers of senior officers whose advancements would no doubt be slowed by longer-serving superiors, the legislation seeks to allow any officer of one-star and above to retire with full benefits even if he has not served the full three years set by law today.

By law, all officers "serve at the pleasure of the president," and can be asked to retire at any point. The legislation would ease financial hardships of early retirement.

Mr. Chu said certain positions would be untouched by any new rules to lengthen tours of duty, and he cited the commanders of ground divisions, naval battle groups and air wings, whose responsibilities are focused on readiness and war fighting and less on carrying out new policies. However sweeping these proposed changes may be, Mr. Rumsfeld chose not to pursue two significant proposals that had been aired privately with some members of Congress.

One previous proposal, to consolidate a number of senior staff positions of the Joint Staff under the defense secretary, would have required rewriting the Goldwater-Nickles legislation that set up the current system of the Joint Chiefs and regional combatant commanders. The idea of merging personnel, which was viewed by some officers as an attempt to reign in the independent analysis of the military's Joint Staff, is not in the proposed legislation.

Also absent from the proposed legislation is a suggestion to eliminate a number of assistant secretary of defense positions, consolidating their responsibilities.

Mr. Rumsfeld has made no secret that he views his personnel decisions as equally significant to changes he may bring to weapons procurement strategic doctrine, and he has begun interviewing each candidate from all of the four armed services for every position of one-star and above, according to senior aides.

This involvement in the advancement of senior officers, which is far more detailed and hands-on than previous defense secretaries, has rankled some in the officer corps who say Mr. Rumsfeld is weeding out the high command to preserve only like-minded officers.

In broad terms, Mr. Rumsfeld does not argue with that assessment. "My whole life as an executive has proven to me the importance of people," he said during the speech in January. "That's why selecting them is so critical."

Assuring long-term Pentagon changes requires senior leaders with the "orientation, attitude, energy and intellect to move big chunks on their own initiative," Mr. Rumsfeld said. "If you get the right people,

those ripples go out in exactly the right way, and for a long time."

Mr. Chu said that Pentagon analysis found more than 300,000 military jobs that could be filled by civilians. The proposed legislation would allow the Pentagon to "convert some of these posts that could be civilians to civilian status," using those personnel slots "for other new kinds of structure that the country will need in the years ahead," he added.